

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the property for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the property could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information		For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 081-7144	
Property Name(s):	Boxerwood (preferred); Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Munger House; Munger Lodge		
Property Date(s):	1952-1957 <input type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post	Open to Public? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Property Address:	963 Ross Road	City: Lexington	Zip: 24450
County or Ind. City:	Rockbridge USGS Quad(s): Lexington VA		

Physical Character of General Surroundings

Acreage: ~15 acres Setting (choose one): ☐ Urban ☐ Town ☐ Village ☐ Suburban ☒ Rural ☐ Transportation Corridor

Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features:

Boxerwood is located less than a mile from the Lexington city limits, in a semi-rural setting that has transitioned over the last 50 years from open farmland into more densely developed residential lots. Accessed by two-lane, winding Ross Road (route 687), the 15.362-acre property is comprised of 7 parcels that, taken together, represent about half of Boxerwood's original 30.562 acres.

- 74B-A-20: 6.276 acres (Munger Lodge parcel)
- 74B-A-20A: 1.794 acres (Orchard House parcel)
- 74B-2-B, 74B-2-C, and 74B-2-F: 3.29 acres
- 74B-2-X: 0.1 acres
- 74B-3-I: 4.002 acres (the Meadow)

About half of Boxerwood's current acreage is devoted to the Mungers' designed landscape, which occupies an elongated, triangular ridge roughly defined by two shallow stream drainages on its east and west sides and by Ross Road along the north. Additional acreage to the west is a woodlot, and open space to the east was used as a hay pasture. The land slopes downward about 60 feet from its highest elevation along Ross Road to the truncated southern end. The garden has spectacular views eastward to the Blue Ridge Mountains and incorporates specimen trees and shrubs into most of its designed areas. The Mungers first began planting in 1952, got serious about horticulture in 1957, and by the 1970s had come to view Boxerwood as a living art installation of their own design. Boxerwood's current woody-plant inventory includes 2,500+ specimen trees and shrubs, especially significant collections of dwarf conifers (167 varieties), magnolias (57 varieties), dogwoods (81 varieties), rhododendrons and azaleas (290 varieties), and Japanese maples (154 varieties). The Mungers also emphasized the ornamental Ilex, Malus, and Prunus genera.

Notable landscape features of the property include:

- Great Oak and other older trees (ca. 1950 and earlier): large old deciduous hardwoods (oaks, sycamores, maples), remnants of Johnstone farm woodlot
- Entry Garden (begun 1952): meandering stone path to front door; circular stone-bordered planting bed, centered by ornamental tree, fronts the Japanese screened pavilion;

- Terrace Garden (begun 1952): semicircular flagstone terrace/patio on southeast side of house featuring Blue Ridge views framed by varied plantings for multi-season interest
- Sacrificial Spring (in use from 1952): existing spring, named by Mungers
- Old Pond (constructed 1952): developed by excavating a former marshy spot at southernmost portion of property; fed by two springs and surface drainage (headwaters of Woods Creek); initially bordered by indigenous and exotic plants, and stocked with bass and perch; used as swimming hole by Munger family and guests
- Vegetable Garden (begun 1952): intensively planted rectangular plot between house and spring, used by Mrs. Munger for producing fresh vegetables
- The Crypt (1960s): concrete-lined burial vault in the ground covered by square slab of polished dark marble, topped by sculpture, *No Bear is an Island*; located near Orchard House
- New Pond (1968): fed only by surface drainage; bordered by exotic plants; originally occupied by koi (Japanese carp)
- 10 or 12 modern sculptures (installed before 1978).

Recent modifications to the landscape, undertaken since the late 1990s to advance the educational mission of the Boxerwood Education Association, include installation of the following:

- “Play Trail” interactive garden for small children
- N.E.W.T.S wastewater treatment system
- solar hot water panels supported on rustic cedar supports to augment home heating system
- meadow stage
- timber frame pavilion/outdoor “classroom” (2014)
- information kiosk
- perennial planting beds
- maintained trails and signage
- expanded parking areas with rain gardens and landscaping materials storage areas

Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property:

- Tenant House Site (house demolished ca. 1950): at southern end of property, near Old Pond; Mungers regularly turned up fragments of bottles in the vicinity
- Grain Barn/Tractor Shed (pre-1951): one-story, wood-framed, gable-roofed structure with open and closed shed wings; exterior sheathed with whitewashed circular sawn vertical planks; standing seam metal roof; gable-end entry; artwork by Dr. Munger and others affixed to exterior walls
- Dump sites (pre-1951): associated with former farm uses of property
- Spring House (ca. 1952): one-story, wood-framed shelter for spring, the original water source for the property; shed roof, exposed rafter ends
- Orchard House (1956): one-story, Modern wood-framed guest house dwelling designed by Roanoke-based architects Wells & Meagher; has an unusual butterfly roof; like Munger Lodge, features natural materials and expansive areas of glass.

Ownership Category: ☒ Private ☐ Public-Local ☐ Public-State ☐ Public-Federal

Individual Resource Information

What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc...

Single family dwelling, guest house, and designed landscape

What is the current use? (if other than the historical use) Environmental Education and Special Events Center

Architectural style or elements of styles: Modernist/Modern Movements: Wrightian

Architect, builder, or original owner:

Architect: Wells & Meagher (Roanoke);
Garden Designer: Robert S. Munger, MD

of stories 1 Condition: ☐Excellent ☒Good ☐Fair ☐Deteriorated ☐Poor ☐Ruins ☐Rebuilt ☐Renovated

Are there any known threats to this property? None known

Resource Component Information

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer "n/a." If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

Foundation: Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete.

Poured concrete continuous footers

Structure: Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known.

Wood frame (sawn lumber)

Walls: Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles.

Horizontal redwood planks; rubble fieldstone veneer

Windows: Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced?

Front (street-facing) elevation has side-hinged wood casements grouped together to bring natural light into the kitchen; and two groupings of fixed and operable aluminum-framed windows that illuminate two bedrooms. The rear elevation is dominated by a wall of windows: wood-framed floor-to-ceiling fixed windows in the living-dining area topped by operable single-pane transoms. Combination windows (single-light casements flanking large fixed windows) pierce exterior walls along other elevations of the main block and the bedroom wing, and are supplemented with clerestory windows that provide light and ventilation along the upper walls of the study.

Porch: Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details.

Entry porch: equally spaced 4" x 4" wood posts support a shed roof over a concrete slab walkway that leads from the carport to the front door. Several skylights in the porch are positioned to funnel natural daylight to the kitchen windows. Garden Terrace: flagstone-paved rear patio, with a modern pipe-framed shade structure overhead, extends living space into the rear yard.

Roof: Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material.

Shallow-pitch shed roof of frame construction, covered with pebbles on built-up roofing; broad overhangs with enclosed soffits.

Chimney(s): List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible.

One large rectangular interior chimney with two flues, constructed of roughly coursed fieldstone masonry lined with terra cotta flue tiles.

Architectural Description of Individual Resource: *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated.)*

Exterior:

The Munger House is a one-story, sprawling single-family Modernist dwelling built in two phases. Designed by architects Wells & Meagher of Roanoke, Virginia, the original house (1952) is located at the end of a meandering driveway that enters the Boxerwood property from Ross Road. The unassuming front elevation has few windows and a simple shed-roofed covered walkway that extends from the carport across the façade to a glass-paneled entry door. The building's structural wood frame, clad in some areas with redwood siding and in others with roughly coursed local fieldstone, is built upon a poured concrete perimeter foundation that incorporates a concrete slab floor, and is topped by a shallow-pitched shed roof with broad overhangs and boxed eaves. Windows include a custom floor-to-ceiling wood-framed window wall; wood casement, fixed, and, awning windows in various combinations throughout the house for daylighting and ventilation; and manufactured metal combination windows (large picture window flanked by operable casements) in each of the house's four bedrooms.

In 1956-1957, Wells & Meagher were commissioned by the Mungers to design alterations and additions to the house: the carport was partially enclosed to provide a workshop area adjacent to the original study; exterior cabinets were installed in the reduced carport space; a wood-framed pergola/sunshade was added outside the dining area; and a wing reached by covered flagstone-paved walkways was added. The wing, which was designed to integrate a screened pavilion/play space with several storage rooms, features redwood siding installed with wide reveals like that of the original house, but has a gable roof rather than a shed. The pavilion's screens were at some point replaced with windows and wood panels, and additional doors and windows were added to provide exterior access to the wing's various storage spaces.

Recent exterior modifications include the installation of a temporary pipe-frame shade structure across the southeast-facing garden elevation of the house, installation of upgraded electrical panels, and selective repairs to water-damaged roof framing and eave overhangs in the house's wing.

Interior:

The plan of the Munger House is zoned, with a living-dining-kitchen wing and a bedroom wing that join together at the entry vestibule. The vestibule features a low ceiling, an in-floor planting bed, polished concrete slab flooring, recessed ceiling lights with glass lenses made from repurposed ashtrays, natural wood wall surfaces, and a coat closet with a recessed pocket door. The bedroom wing extends to the left from the vestibule, and includes a central hallway, a master bedroom and bathroom suite, three additional bedrooms, and a guest bathroom. Built-in chests of drawers and desks remain in several of the bedrooms. All bedrooms are currently in use as offices. Finishes throughout this wing included polished concrete floors, painted plaster walls, unpainted natural-finished hardwood accent walls, unpaneled wood doors, plain trim, and metal windows. The compact vestibule exits through an eight-foot standard ceiling-height opening to the open-plan living-dining area, which has a much higher ceiling that follows the shed roof's angle up to meet the taller southeast wall. This feature wall incorporates floor-to-ceiling windows, including some operable transoms and a single-leaf glass-panel door that roughly demarcates the living area from the dining area. A recessed track for full-length draperies remains intact in the ceiling along the window wall. Other major features of the living area include the large fieldstone fireplace that offers an interior focal point and that also accommodates the flue coming from the adjacent mechanical room, and a wall of built-in shelving. Adjoining the dining area is a former study; built-ins books now provide space for nature-education related exhibits; the partition dividing the study from the dining space has been partially removed for greater accessibility. Also adjacent to the dining area, but occupying the front of the house, is the large galley-plan kitchen, which retains original slab-panel wood cabinets, a pantry closet, and an exterior door that leads to the carport. A bank of three casement windows provides abundant natural daylighting for the work surfaces. The nearby mechanical room houses a boiler and controls for the in-floor radiant heating system, along with several electrical panels designed to meet the building's original service needs. Finishes are similar to those found elsewhere in the house, with the exception of white oak parquet flooring atop the concrete in the living-dining-study areas. Post-original kitchen alterations include late-twentieth-century wallpaper, laminate countertops, and vinyl flooring.

The 1956-1957 addition includes three distinct spaces: the formerly screened pavilion, which incorporates several Japanese design elements, including a tatami-mat pattern in the poured concrete floor, and a small rock garden/pond feature; a potting shed/work room, later used for general storage; and a second storage room for larger garden tools and equipment. The interior partition between the pavilion space and the work room space has been altered, but otherwise the interior plan is unchanged.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property. (Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

Boxerwood is a historic residential landscape that reflects the nature-inspired and -oriented domestic lifestyle of the locally prominent Munger family through its architecture and garden development. Purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Munger in 1951, the property was previously associated with the Johnstone-Paxton family and functioned as part of a large farm. Due in part to its proximity to Lexington, the farm was subdivided after World War II, during a period of rapid population expansion in the community. One portion of the farm became a private golf course, another large area was developed as the prestigious Providence Hill neighborhood, and other parcels, like the Munger property along Ross Road, were sold separately as large rural parcels without typical subdivision amenities. Robert S. Munger, from Dallas, Texas (his family developed that city's Swiss Avenue and Munger Place neighborhoods in the early decades of the twentieth century) graduated from Washington & Lee College in 1935. He returned to Lexington in 1941, accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth "Betty" Evans Munger (formerly of Braintree, Massachusetts), and established his medical practice. The Munger family expanded over the following decade to include sons Robert and Christopher, and daughter Sally. The Mungers' purchase of the Boxerwood site in 1951 enabled them to raise their children in a custom home and setting that were intentionally designed to respect and appreciate the natural environment, and to do so with an informal Modern aesthetic that was determinedly not bound to the colonial precedents so common in Virginia at the time.

The Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Munger House at Boxerwood meets National Register **Criterion C in the area of Architecture**, as a locally and regionally significant example of a private residence demonstrating innovative design features associated with the Modernism movement, rare among Virginia houses from the early post-World War II period. Located less than a mile outside the Lexington city limits, the Munger House was built in 1952 and expanded just a few years later; both plans were developed by Roanoke-based, Virginia Tech-educated architects Wells & Meagher. The Munger House's compact, low-impact design reflects a passive solar, organic approach to Modernism, akin to the Usonian House ideal promoted by architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Character-defining features of the house include a ground-hugging profile, shed roof, durable natural materials, a concrete slab floor with zoned radiant hydronic heating, a Great Room with a dominant fireplace/hearth and a southeast-facing window wall, a four-bedroom sleeping wing, and built-in furnishings. Alterations to the house in 1956-1957 included modifications to the carport and additions to the side and rear including a wooden shade structure, a semi-detached wing with a screened pavilion/playroom with Japanese influences (e.g., a tatami mat pattern embedded in the concrete floor), and covered walkways. The house has been little altered since the late 1950s (with the exception of windows and doors added to the addition), and exhibits a high degree of integrity inside and out. The mid-1950s one-bedroom guest house, "Orchard House" (also designed by Wells & Meagher), bolsters the architectural significance of the property through its use of such Modern elements as a butterfly roof and passive solar design. Though it has been altered somewhat to accommodate year-round residential use, Orchard House retains good integrity.

Boxerwood may also meet National Register **Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture**, as a locally significant, rare example of a private residential designed garden/arboretum. Developed by Robert S. Munger, MD, and his family, the grounds' earliest intentional plantings were established to shade and ornament the house. Ponds, developed springs, paths, retaining walls, bridges, and other elements complement the planted features. By the late 1950s, Dr. Munger's horticultural interest focused on collecting and cultivating rare and ornamental trees and shrubs, and his planting beds expanded to encompass the much larger acreage of the full property. The early plants have matured and serve as the backbone elements of the garden; in some cases they are obscured by plants added in the 1960s-1980s. Dr. Munger amassed natives and exotics in quantity and variety, from local, national, and international sources; dogwoods, Japanese maples, dwarf conifers, and magnolias were particular specialties. In the 1970s the Mungers began incorporating large, abstract outdoor sculptures into the landscape. In 1997, the property transitioned from private residential use into public use, and now serves as an outdoor education and special events center; it has been under the direction of the not-for-profit Boxerwood Educational Association since 2000. As noted on the Boxerwood website,

In over 30 years of collecting, Dr. Munger estimated that he had planted somewhere between 12,000 - 13,000 trees and shrubs. He suggested that he had probably lost about half those to "wrong tree-wrong place", disease, infestation, short life expectancy, among other reasons. His passion for his garden grew until his death in 1988. Shortly after Dr. Munger's death, an inventory revealed over 7,000 trees and shrubs attributable to him. Some 2,500 were labeled cultivars. Today, Boxerwood has over 7,000 trees and shrubs (including just over 1,300 cultivars of Dr. Munger's), but nature has done much of the planting.

Sources:

Munger, Robert S. and Elizabeth E., *Boxerwood: A Garden of Trees and Shrubs* (self-published, 1978).

“Betty Munger, Longtime Bookstore Manager at W&L, Dies at 91,” found on Washington & Lee University website at <http://www2.wlu.edu/x26173.xml> (accessed 15 January 2014).

“Brief History of Boxerwood,” found on Boxerwood website at <http://www.boxerwood.org/aboutus/history.asp> (accessed 15 January 2014).

Various garden plans, in collection of Boxerwood Educational Association.

Wells & Meagher, AIA, Architectural Drawings for Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Munger House (1952).

Wells & Meagher, AIA, Architectural Drawings for Guest House for Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Munger (1955).

Wells & Meagher, AIA Architectural Drawings for Additions and Alterations to Munger House (1956).

Legal Owner(s) of the Property (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Boxerwood Educational Association

(Name)

963 Ross Road

(Address)

Lexington

(City)

VA

(State)

24450

(Zip Code)

bruce@boxerwood.org

(Email Address)

540-463-2697

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Owner's Signature: _____ Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Bruce Bytnar, Managing Director

Daytime Telephone: (540) 463-2697

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Leslie A. Giles

(Name)

Landmark

Preservation Associates

6 Houston Street

(Address)

Lexington

(City)

VA

(State)

24450

(Zip Code)

leslie_a_giles@rockbridge.net

(Email Address)

540.460.2201

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: July 7, 2014**Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Spencer Suter

(Name)

County Administrator

(Position)

Rockbridge County

(Locality)

150 South Main Street

(Address)

Lexington

(City)

VA

(State)

24450

(Zip Code)

540-463-4361

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

The Boxerwood Educational Association (BEA) is seeking evaluation with the hope of having the property listed on the state and national registers. Designation would help the BEA in its efforts to raise funds to preserve the house and other features of the property, to improve interpretation of the house as part of its environmental education efforts, to aid in tourism and special event marketing of the property, and would potentially enable the syndication of rehabilitation tax credits.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☒ No ☐